

CIA's under-bedcover age

From PAUL WEBSTER, Paris, February 16

The CIA has been using trained seducers as bait for girl secretaries working in the French Communist Party headquarters, a building known as the Aquarium.

According to the party's official daily newspaper, L'Humanite, today the operations were directed from a hotel near the Tuileries and a flat near the Eiffel Tower, the two CIA bases in Paris outside the embassy. One agent was told to pursue a fat brunette who walked badly and lived with her mother.

The luckier spy was sent after a girl whose bedroom curtains were similar to those "frequently seen in disreputable bars," while a third agent had orders to seduce a raven-haired "St Germain de Pres" type who liked short skirts and whose sex life was secretly filmed.

The seduction operation was a total failure because the agents "were confronted by the integrity and vigilance of the

militants under attack," L'Humanite said.

Blackmail and bribery have also failed to subvert the Communist faith of other party members, according to the paper, which devotes a whole page to Operation Aquarium, a round-the-clock watch on the huge, glass-fronted building in the Place Colonel Fabien in Paris's 19th arrondissement.

Quoting extensively from what appear to be agents' reports without showing any proof of their authenticity, L'Humanite describes a three-stage operation.

The first is constant patrol by CIA agents, "usually Belgians and Germans," who, the paper says, are allowed to work without any French Government control. A continuous film record is kept of cars going in and out of the Aquarium's basement car park and all registration numbers are photographed by cameras concealed in briefcases.

The second stage is the

constant following of staff, some of whom are offered the joys of capitalism. In at least one case a woman agent was used and bribes of as much as £1,000 a month are supposedly offered.

The third stage is a vast technical operation which sounds like Watergate gone mad. The newspaper says there have been almost non-stop attempts to bug the headquarters and once it was flooded with buzzed publicity ashtrays. Attempts have also been made to put microphones in senior party members' cars.

The CIA also supposedly pays bribes to rent or buy houses next to senior officials' homes so that listening devices can be used.

The article is sprinkled with quotes from Philip Agee's book on CIA methods. But the newspaper makes no attempt to justify its claims which include the statement that the CIA has a full-time training base in Paris.